

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 12331 01 OF 02 111708Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 EB-07 IO-10 /093 W

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R 111650Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3690

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 12331

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN EXILES FORM POLITICAL PARTY

SUMMARY: FORMER ETHIOPIAN GENERAL TEGEN MET EMBASSY OFFICER AUGUST 8 TO DISCUSS NEW POLITICAL PARTY FORMED BY ETHIOPIAN EXILES AND TO SEEK US BLESSINGS. TEGEN DESCRIBED THE WEAKNESSES OF THE PMG, THE COMPOSITION AND TENETS OF THE NEW PARTY, THE POSSIBILITIES OF A MILITARY OVERTHROW OF THE PMG, AND THE PARTY'S INITIAL FOREIGN CONTACTS. END SUMMARY.

1. FORMER ETHIOPIAN MAJOR GENERAL NEGA TEGEN, TRAVELING UNDER THE ALIAS OF GALECHEW, CALLED AT EMBASSY AUGUST 8. APPOINTMENT WITH EMBASSY OFFICER WAS ARRANGED THROUGH POLITICAL COUNSELOR WHO HAD RECEIVED URGENT TELEPHONE CALL PREVIOUS EVENING FROM MICHAEL ISSAU, SON OF FORMER
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PAGE 02 LONDON 12331 01 OF 02 111708Z

ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR IN UK, LT. GENERAL ISSAU MANGESHA.

2. TEGEN DESCRIBED WITH CLIPPED PRECISION HIS PAST ASSOCIATION WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS AND HIS ACTIVITIES SINCE THE COUP. HE EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH NOT A PRIME CONSPIRATOR IN THE MOVE TO OVERTHROW THE OLD REGIME, HE HAD BEEN AWARE OF THE PLOT AND HAD SUPPORTED ITS OBJECTIVES. AS COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE THIRD DIVISION IN HARRAR, HE HELD HIS TROOPS IN CHECK WHILE HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES TOOK POWER IN THE CAPITAL. DURING THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THE NEW ORDER HE BELIEVED HIS MOST COMPELLING TASK TO BE THE PROTECTION OF ETHIOPIA'S BORDER WITH SOMALIA LEST THE SOMALIS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION IN ADDIS AND INVADE THE VITAL OGADEN. IN THE SPRING OF 1974, TEGEN WAS APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF GONDAR PROVINCE, HIS NATIVE REGION, WHERE HE REMAINED MORE THAN SIX MONTHS.

3. WHILE GOVERNOR, TEGEN ONLY ONCE VISITED ADDIS ABABA, BUT IT WAS DURING THIS VISIT THAT HE CAME TO SEE THE REVOLUTION WAS GOING AWRY. YOUNGER OFFICERS APPEARED VENGEFUL; ADMINISTRATION HAD BECOME SLOPPY AND HAPHAZARD; RIVALRIES FLARED IN THE SCRAMBLING FOR POWER. WHEN, TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR, THE REGIME ARRESTED AND THEN

EXECUTED MANY OF HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES, HE FELT THAT HE TOO WOULD SOON BE A TARGET OF THE PURGE. BELIEVING HIS ARREST IMMINENT, HE SLIPPED INTO THE BUSH WHERE HE REMAINED ALMOST CONTINUALLY IN HIDING UNTIL MAY OF THIS YEAR.

4. TEGEN EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH MARRIED TO ONE OF THE EMPEROR'S GRANDDAUGHTERS, HE HAD INITIALLY SUPPORTED THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT. THE OLD GUARO WAS ALMOST PARALYTIC IN ITS CONSERVATISM, CORRUPT, TOP-HEAVY, AND INCAPABLE OF PROGRESS. THE NATION REQUIRED IMAGINATIVE AND VIGOROUS LEADERSHIP, BUT INSTEAD LANGUISHED UNDER A FLABBY, SELF-CONTENTED REGIME. THE PMG REGRETTABLY HAS NOT PROVED MUCH BETTER, TEGEN CLAIMS. IT HAS LOST

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PAGE 03 LONDON 12331 01 OF 02 111708Z

CONTROL. POWER IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE YOUNGER OFFICERS, A GROUP OF MUTINEERS, HE SAID, IMMATURE, INEXPERIENCED, AND CONSUMED BY INTERNAL BICKERING. THE GOOD OFFICERS ARE GONE, DEAD OR EXILED. AND NOW THE NATION IS ON THE VERGE OF DISINTEGRATION. ALREADY THE REGIME HAS RENOUNCED CLAIMS TO DJIBOUTI; THE ARMY HAS NO HOPE OF WINNING IN ERITREA; RUMOR HAS IT, TEGEN SAYS, THAT THE REGIME IS EVEN WILLING TO SURRENDER THE OGADEN. WHILE A CENTRIFUGAL FORCE IS AT WORK ON THE TERRITORY OF THE NA-

TION, THE SOLE INSTITUTION THAT CAN HOLD IT TOGETHER --
THE MILITARY -- IS ITSELF FACING COLLAPSE.

5. TEGEN SAID THAT SINCE MAY HE AND HIS ETHIOPIAN
FRIENDS IN EUROPE HAVE SOUGHT TO ORGANIZE AN ALTERNATIVE
TO THE PMG. AT A JULY MEETING IN LONDON, A GROUP OF EX-
ILES SUCCESSFULLY PUT TOGETHER A MANIFESTO DENOUNCING THE
CURRENT REGIME AND PROCLAIMING THE ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC
UNION (EDU). CHAIRMAN OF THE EDU IS LT. GEN. ISSAU
MANGESHA; VICE CHAIRMAN IS FORMER GOVERNOR OF TIGRE, RAS

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12331 02 OF 02 111810Z

43

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 12331

MANGESHA SYOUM. TEGEN HIMSELF IS FIELD COMMANDER. TWO
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DO NOT USE THEIR
REAL NAMES, BECAUSE, TEGEN CONFIDED, THEY ARE LOCATED IN

ETHIOPIA: SECRETARY GENERAL FEISA JAMMO AND DEPUTY SYG MISS TELLELA HAILU. TEGEN SAID THAT THE EDU DOES NOT WISH TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK. BUT NEITHER DOES IT WISH TO WITNESS THE DESTRUCTION OF A UNITED ETHIOPIA OR ITS DOMINATION BY FOREIGN POWERS. IT IS NOT ROYALIST NOR DOES IT PURSUE ANY ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, REGIONAL, OR IDEOLOGICAL LINE. THE EDU, TEGEN EXPLAINED, IS PROGRESSIVE, SUPPORTING LAND REFORM, DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS AND THE DECENTRALIZATION OF GOVERNMENT. THE UNION ENVISAGES A FEDERAL, CIVILIAN ETHIOPIA WITH ERITREA ENJOYING MAXIMUM AUTONOMY BUT NOT INDEPENDENCE. (TEGEN EXPRESSED A FEAR THAT THE REPRESSIONS OF THE PRESENT REGIME MAY HAVE ALREADY PUSHED

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PAGE 02 LONDON 12331 02 OF 02 111810Z

THE ERITREANS BEYOND THE POINT WHERE EVEN FULL AUTONOMY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.)

6. TEGEN CLAIMED CONFIDENCE THAT A MILITARY FORCE COULD QUICKLY BE ASSEMBLED TO BRING DOWN THE PMG. THE SECOND AND THIRD DIVISIONS ARE DISCONTENTED, HE SAID. HE ESTIMATED THERE ARE 480,000 RIFLES IN GONDAR ALONE, INCLUDING MANY M-1'S SOLD BY STRAGGLING PMG SOLDIERS. HE FURTHER GUESSED THAT ALMOST 2,000 TROOPS WOULD DESERT THE ASMARA COMMAND IF HE GAVE THE WORD. STILL, TEGEN SAID, ANY FORCE WOULD BE ILL-ARMED, FOR MOST OF THE WEAPONS AVAILABLE ARE OLD AND VARIOUS, AND AMMUNITION IS PRACTICALLY UNOBTAINABLE. A SERIOUS EFFORT TO DISLODGE THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WOULD REQUIRE A SUPPLY OF NEW SMALL ARMS AND SUPPORTING MATERIEL. TEGEN SAID THAT WHILE POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH THE ERITREANS WOULD BE AWKWARD, A MILITARY ALLIANCE IS POSSIBLE. HE CLAIMED THAT FORCES ALREADY AT HIS COMMAND COULD CUT THE ROAD TO ASMARA LIKE -- WITH A SNAP OF HIS FINGERS -- THAT.

7. THE EDU HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF SUDAN, SAUDI ARABIA, GERMANY, AND THE UK. TEGEN WAS SCHEDULED TO GO TO ITALY THAT DAY WHERE HE HOPES TO FIND SOME FINANCIAL AID. ASKED WHETHER THE EDU HAD CONTACTED THE ISRAELIS, TEGEN REPLIED THAT FOR THE MOMENT AN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT BE FEASIBLE BECAUSE MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE EDU MUST COME SOUTH THROUGH SUDAN. HE SAID THAT HIS PRESENT VISIT TO THE EMBASSY CONSTITUTED THE FIRST EDU OVERTURE TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. HE IS SEEKING, HE SAID, AN AMERICAN GREEN LIGHT.

8. EMBASSY OFFICER REPLIED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS ENJOYED A LONG FRIENDSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA AND HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE NATION. WE CONTINUE TO HAVE FULL AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE

PRESENT GOVERNMENT. WE, LIKE OTHER NATIONS, ARE NEVER-
THELESS CONCERNED BY THE TROUBLES IN ERITREA AND THROUGH-
OUT THE HORN OF AFRICA. TEGEN WAS ASSURED THAT HIS
VIEWS WOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO WASHINGTON AND TO OUR
EMBASSY IN ADDIS, AND HE WAS INVITED TO CALL AGAIN AT THE
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PAGE 03 LONDON 12331 02 OF 02 111810Z

EMBASSY WHEN NEXT IN LONDON.

9. EDU MANIFESTO AND COPY OF EDU CABLE TO OAU CHAIRMAN
IN KAMPALA POUCHED TO ADDRESSEES.

RICHARDSON

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